U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation

The Bomb Threat Challenge

FBI Bomb Data Center

Introduction

As we enter an era in which the administration of law enforcement becomes more complicated, greater challenges are thrust not only upon police officials, but also upon the community at large. The bomb threat is one such challenge. The bomber has a distinct advantage over other criminals because he can pick his time and place from afar, and use the bomb threat as a weapon to achieve his criminal objectives. This bulletin has been prepared in order to provide law enforcement and public safety agencies with a working base from which to establish their own bomb threat response capability; and to enable these same agencies, when called upon by potential bomb or bomb threat targets in the business community, to offer assistance in developing guidelines for a bomb threat response plan.

In developing a bomb threat response plan, there are four general areas of consideration: 1. Planning and Preparation; 2. Receiving a Threat; 3. Evacuation; and 4. Search. Information presented under each of these four topics will assist in the preparation of an effective bomb threat plan Suggested methods described in this bulletin will apply in most cases; however, specific requirements will be unique for each facility and will need to be worked out on an individual basis. Once such factors as the function of the organization, size of the facility, number of personnel, location and relation to other establishments, and available resources are evaluated; a comprehensive bomb threat plan can be formulated.

Planning and Preparation

Words used in conjunction with this phase include organization, liaison, coordination, and control. Only with a properly organized plan will those affected by a bomb threat know how, when, and in what order to proceed. Liaison should be maintained between appropriate public safety agencies and facilities likely to be subject to bomb threats or bombings; and also between public safety agencies and military explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams charged with responding to bomb incidents. Through such contact, it will be possible to determine what technical and training services might be needed by potential bomb threat targets. (Please note that while some public safety agencies may provide considerable aid in bomb threat situations, most public and private facilities must plan and carry out the major portion of the plan, including internal control and decision making.) Both liaison and coordination are factors which a bomb threat plan must take into consideration, especially when neighboring establishments or businesses may share the same building. Proper coordination will assure smooth handling of the bomb threat with the least amount of inconvenience to all concerned. Control is especially important during evacuation and search efforts, and effective security will lessen the risk of an actual explosive device ever being planted.

Prevention is another factor that cannot be too heavily emphasized when dealing with potential bomb threat situations. It is a process of making access to likely hiding places - both inside and outside a building - as difficult as possible. Tightened security and controlled entry will help accomplish this goal. Other precautionary measures which might be undertaken include the following:

Locate and/or eliminate likely improvised explosive device (lED) hiding places; develop a procedure to inspect incoming parcels; control access to confidential material; provide for effective key control; keep exits unobstructed at all times; ensure adequate inside, outside, and emergency lighting; and consider using electronic or photographic surveillance (if used, post appropriate warning signs). Establish procedures to periodically inspect first aid supplies, fire extinguishers, and other emergency equipment to maintain

adequate stock and proper working order. Surveillance and security measures should also be checked at reasonable intervals. When inspecting packages and mail for possible IEDs, items bearing no marks to indicate normal mail processing, having unusual shapes, or possessing disproportionate weight-to-size ratios are examples of possible mail bombs.

Those best prepared will meet the threat most effectively. With a well-thought out plan, a bomb threat situation can be resolved with a minimum of risk to people and property, while minimizing the disruption of normal operations. Proper preparation also encompasses practice and evaluation of the plan.

This stage would be incomplete if clear-cut primary and alternate levels of authority were not established, along with designated primary and alternate individuals to perform the tasks required at the different levels of authority. People assigned to such key positions are usually management or supervisory personnel. Each should be familiar with the scope and responsibility of the assignment, and have full authority to make necessary decisions. Possibly the most important decision for these people will be whether to evacuate in the face of a bomb threat. A single individual should be vested with the full authority to order and direct the evacuation, search, plant shutdown, re-entry, and other emergency procedures.

When an evacuation and/or search is ordered, this person will be in charge of the bomb threat control center from which all operations will be directed. If a mobile control center is deemed impractical, primary and alternate locations should be designated for a stationary control center. More information regarding the control center is presented in the search section of this publication.

Next, evacuation and search teams should be selected. The most likely candidates are volunteers from among those people who work in the building each day. Security and maintenance personnel are also good choices because they are familiar with both public and out-of-the-way areas. Members of nearby police and fire departments, or military EOD squads, may be able to offer help in training the teams. It should be stressed that assignments must be carried out without hesitation and in a confident manner. Professionalism by all those involved in the operation will instill confidence in those subjected to abnormal procedures.

As with the individual authorized to order an evacuation and search, one person should be selected as media spokesman. Although publicity in a bomb threat situation is usually not sought, such a spokesman could ensure the availability of accurate information to media representatives, and could help prevent additional bomb threats resulting from the publicizing of erroneous word of mouth accounts.

Once a plan is formulated, all employees, including part-time and summer replacements, should be made conversant with the bomb threat procedure. Specific information regarding planning preparation for the evacuation and search stages can be found later in this publication under those headings.

Receiving a Threat

In preparation for the eventuality of a telephone bomb threat (statistics show that the majority of threats are made over the telephone), all personnel who handle incoming calls to a potential target facility should be supplied with a bomb threat checklist. See Figure 1. When a bomb threat is received, it may be advisable for the person receiving the call to give a prearranged signal (the signal can be as simple as holding up a red card.). This would allow monitoring of the call by more than one person, and it would enable someone else to attempt to record and/or trace the telephone call.

Tape recording the call can reduce the chance or error in recording information provided in the bomb threat; it may serve as evidence; it is a valuable investigative aid; and it will aid in evaluating the authenticity of the bomb threat.

(Since local jurisdictions may have statutes restricting this sort of recording, the proper officials should be contacted prior to installation and use of such equipment.) If a continuous recording setup is not deemed economically practical, a system which could be activated upon receipt of a threat call might be considered feasible. (A local telephone company representative can provide information regarding specific services

available.) Regardless of whether the bomb threat call is to be recorded and/or monitored, the person handling it should remain calm and concentrate on the exact wording of the message, and any other details which could prove valuable in evaluating the threat.

> In those instances when a bomb threat has been electronically recorded, voice identification techniques may be employed. While the courts and the scientific community are divided over the reliability of "voice printing" as evidence, it can serve as an investigative tool. The FBI Laboratory will make examinations for the purpose of investigative leads only, for any law enforcement agency upon written request. Any department desiring to utilize this service may contact either the FBI Laboratory or the nearest FBI Field Office.

Although comprising a smaller percentage of bomb threats, the written threat must be evaluated as carefully as one received over the telephone. Written bomb threats often provide excellent document-type evidence. Once a written threat is recognized, further handling should be avoided in order to preserve fingerprints, handwriting, typewriting, postmarks, and other markings for appropriate examination. This may be accomplished by immediately placing each item (page or pages of threat and mail envelope) in separate protective see through covers, allowing further review of the pertinent information without needless handling. In order to effectively trace such a bomb threat and identify its writer, it is imperative to save all items connected with the bomb threat document.

> Regardless of how the bomb threat is received, the subsequent investigation is potentially an involved and complex one requiring a substantial degree of investigative competency in order to bring the case to successful conclusion. Cognizant of this, and of the fact that useful evidence regarding the threat seldom proceeds past the bomb threat stage, the efficient accumulation and preservation of evidence cannot be overstressed.

After a bomb threat has been received, the next step is to immediately notify the people responsible for carrying out the bomb threat response plan. (During the planning phase, it is important to prepare a list setting forth those individuals and agencies to be notified in the event of a bomb threat. In addition to those people mentioned previously, the police department, fire department, FBI and other Federal public assistance agencies, medical facilities, neighboring businesses, employee union representatives, and local utility companies are among those whose telephone numbers should be included on such a list.)

The bomb threat must now be evaluated for its potential authenticity. Factors involved in such an evaluation are formidable, and any subsequent decision is often based on little reliable information. During this decision making process, until proven otherwise, each threat should be treated as though it involved an actual explosive device; even though bomb threats in which an lED is present comprise a small percentage.

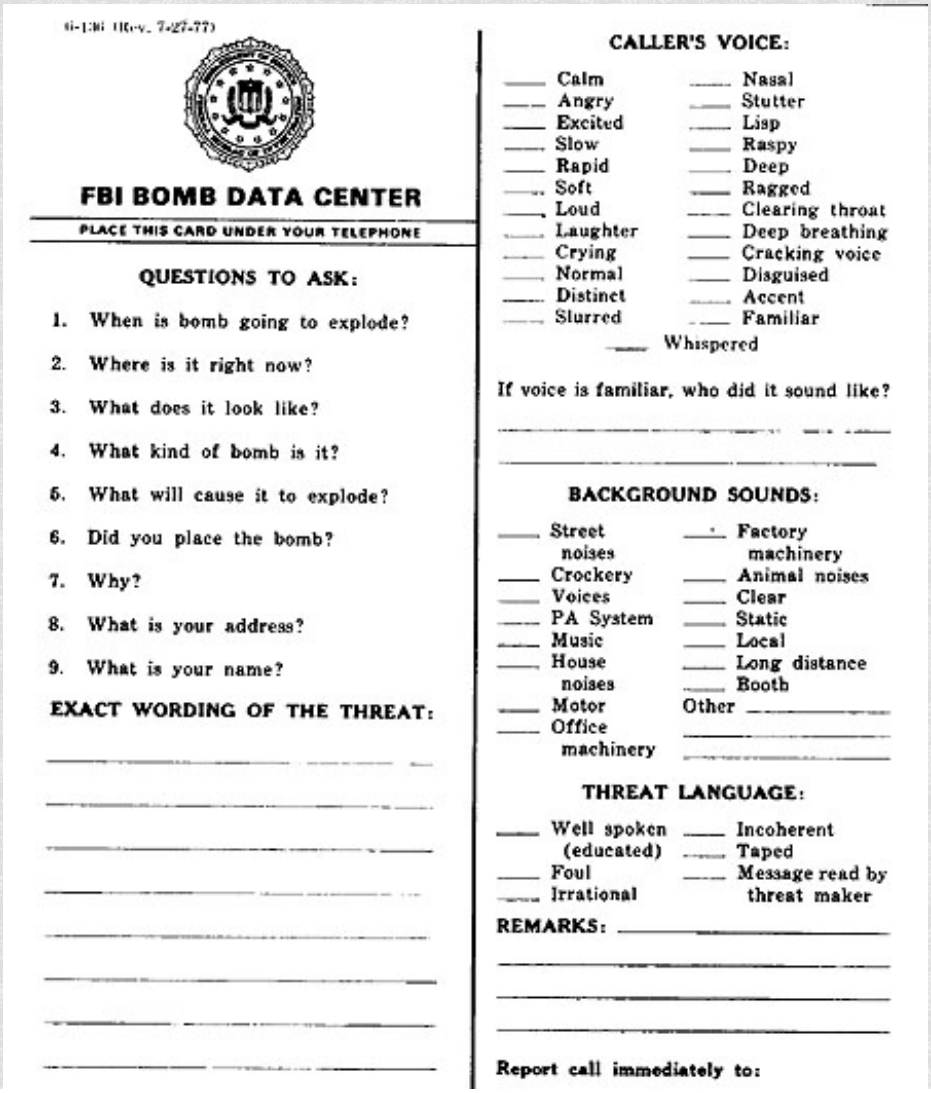
Classifying the bomb threat as specific or nonspecific is the first (and probably least complicated) step. This determination can be made using the information provided in the threat itself. A specific threat is the less common type, but more likely involves an actual explosive device. This type threat usually provides information regarding the bomb, its placement, rationale for the attack, and when the bomb is to explode. If the person making the threat simply states that a bomb has been placed, this is a nonspecific bomb threat. Generally, little additional information is provided. Terrorist organizations usually make specific threats, but have been known to make nonspecific bomb threats even when actual devices are involved. Therefore, neither the specific not the nonspecific threat should be discounted without careful investigation and evaluation.

The most common reasons for making a bomb threat are 1) the caller simply wants to disrupt normal activities and 2) the caller has definite knowledge of a bomb, and wishes to minimize the risk of injury to others. Bombers, especially terrorists, normally are not random attackers. Terrorists most often select a target according to the potential publicity and political or psychological gain that might be achieved by a bombing. Generally, terrorist bombings are meant to destroy property, but not endanger lives; however, this generalization has not always held true and should not be accepted as a routine guideline. Criminal bombers, other than terrorists, select targets for a variety of reasons: revenge, extortion, and intimidation being among the most prominent.

Each new bomb threat incident should be evaluated as it arises and according to the circumstances of the moment. Additional questions to be answered while evaluating the bomb threat include, 1) "Is this another in a series of recent bomb threats?" and 2) "Could the threat have been the result of other recent bomb threats or a recent bombing incident?"

To fully comprehend a bombing or a bomb threat, it is necessary to first understand the psychology of the bomber. On the vast spectrum of human behavior, the bomber is perhaps the most difficult to understand. The unanswered question 'Who is the bomber?" lingers, and bewilderment seems to grow with each bombing. Bombers fall into two categories; the over-regulated and those who lack regulation. While the latter type is credited with committing 90% of the crimes in America, the over-regulated personality stands high on the list of bombers in the country. To understand this personality leads us to respect, and perhaps even fear, the potential for aggressive behavior.

Psychological components of the over-regulated bomber include, 1) a degree of dedication to a cause which is so excessive that the very life of the bomber becomes secondary; 2) an inadequacy which leads the bomber to overcompensate for his actions; 3) above-average intelligence, coupled with a perfectionistic tendency that challenges law enforcement with the realization that the over-regulated bomber possesses unknown, untapped destructive capabilities; 4) a rationality that has become so rigid and fixed that he develops an unshakeable obsession to destroy the projected object of his frustration; 5) an inner conviction of nothingness; and 6) a driving force of intelligent perfectionism that compels the bomber to make life meaningful through the fulfillment of a dream, thus enabling him to totally justify his aggressive, destructive behavior.



FBI BOMB DATA CENTER

PLACE THIS CARD UNDER YOUR TELEPHONE

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

1. When is bomb going to explode?
2. Where is it right now?
3. What does it look like?
4. What kind of bomb is it?
5. What will cause it to explode?
6. Did you place the bomb?
7. Why?
8. What is your address?
9. What is your name?

EXACT WORDING OF THE THREAT:

CALLER'S VOICE:

___ Calm	___ Nasal
___ Angry	___ Stutter
___ Excited	___ Lisp
___ Slow	___ Raspy
___ Rapid	___ Deep
___ Soft	___ Ragged
___ Loud	___ Clearing throat
___ Laughter	___ Deep breathing
___ Crying	___ Cracking voice
___ Normal	___ Disguised
___ Distinct	___ Accent
___ Slurred	___ Familiar
___ Whispered	

If voice is familiar, who did it sound like?

BACKGROUND SOUNDS:

___ Street noises	___ Factory machinery
___ Crockery	___ Animal noises
___ Voices	___ Clear
___ PA System	___ Static
___ Music	___ Local
___ House noises	___ Long distance
___ Motor	___ Booth
___ Office machinery	Other ___

THREAT LANGUAGE:

___ Well spoken (educated)	___ Incoherent
___ Foul	___ Taped
___ Irrational	___ Message read by threat maker

REMARKS:

Report call immediately to:

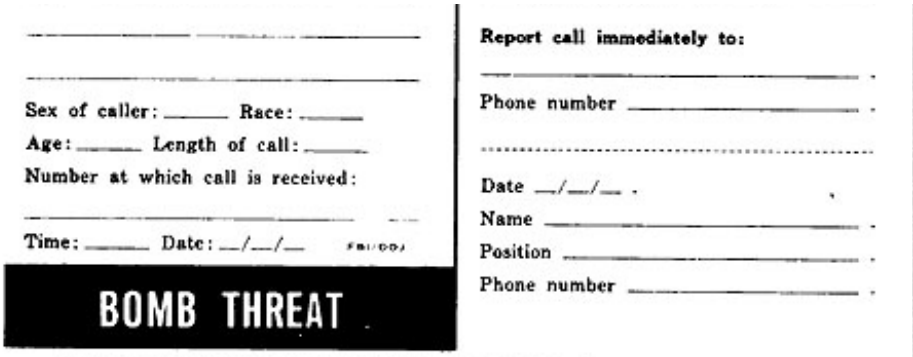


FIGURE 1: FRONT AND BACK VIEWS OF BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST (ACTUAL SIZE, 3¼" x 10½").

Evacuation

Having evaluated the credibility of the threat, it is necessary to decide whether to 1) take no action; 2) search without evacuation; 3) initiate a partial evacuation; or 4) conduct a complete evacuation and search. (Critical public safety service facilities may be precluded from a complete evacuation due to the essential nature of their operation.) To avoid any possibility of risk, a carte blanche policy to evacuate upon receipt of any bomb threat could be established during the planning and preparation stage. However, if the bomb threat is a hoax, such a blanket policy could result in considerable production down-time and would be costly in terms of dollars; which may be playing right into the bomb threat maker's hands.

Many threats are simply pranks perpetrated by employees or students who know that this sort of unconditional bomb threat policy will get them time off from work or school. Perhaps a more prudent approach would be to evaluate each bomb threat on its own merits and evacuate only if deemed necessary.

Additional evacuation planning considerations include the following:

1. Publish a list with primary and alternate evacuation routes and name(s) of person(s) empowered to order partial or complete evacuation and re-entry. Primary and alternative evacuation routes are especially important in the event an actual or suspected bomb is located.

2. Establish an evacuation signal. If the fire alarm is to be used, remember that doors and windows are closed in the event of a fire; while the opposite is advisable when a bomb may be involved. If a voice announcement is used, it should be made in a calm, confident manner. Drills may be helpful to avoid disorder.

3. Select and train evacuation teams. Training must prepare team members to control and direct evacuees with reassurance, and to handle any procedural changes during an evacuation with confidence. Properly trained teams familiar with evacuation procedures, possible hazards, and primary and alternate routes can help alleviate adverse reactions. Evacuation and search team members should wear some sort of identification indicating their authority.

4. Establish evacuation "holding areas," where evacuees may wait safely and comfortably until the danger is over. Such locations should be away from any potential hazards in the event of an explosion, and should offer protection in the event of unfavorable weather conditions.

5. Provide for communication and security requirements during evacuation and search (refer to the description of the control center on following pages). Re-entry by unauthorized personnel should not be permitted during evacuation and search.

6. Determine procedures for shutting off and reactivating utilities. Services such as gas and fuel oil, which could add to the force of an explosion, should be shut off in most cases.

Certain factors are to be weighed in conjunction with the bomb threat evaluation when deciding whether or not to evacuate: the possibility of an effective search without a total evacuation (discussed further in search section): the liabilities involved if an explosion occurs and the building was not evacuated; and proximity and danger to neighboring buildings, or to other businesses sharing the same building. Depending on the type, size, and construction of the structure, and on the location, size, and nature of a suspect TED; a partial evacuation may be feasible. If the facility is a large multi-story building with solid masonry walls between rooms, it may be sufficient to evacuate only those offices in the immediate vicinity of the purported bomb; plus one or two floors above and below the threatened area. Evacuees could be relocated to an unaffected portion of the building, safe from the danger of flying debris and near reliable exit routes in the event of an explosion. When considering a partial evacuation, remember that it requires a greater degree of planning, training, and coordination than a total evacuation.

When a complete evacuation is ordered, primary and alternate evacuation routes should be searched first. Then, if a suspect lED is located, the route may be changed ahead of time. If any route of procedural changes are necessary during the evacuation, the confident operation of evacuation teams will reduce confusion and enable changes to be made smoothly. Remember that a bomb threat evacuation is more complicated than a typical fire drill, requiring greater control and supervision (especially if no reason is given for the evacuation). Without total control, the operation could become a hazardous undertaking.

Prior to leaving the office space, employees should unlock desks, lockers, and file cabinets; and turn off office machinery (but leave lights on). Evacuees should remove all purses, attache cases, personal packages, and lunch boxes which might cause unnecessary wasted searching efforts during the building search phase. Material that might ignite and add to fire or blast damage should be removed if possible. As a precaution in the event of an explosion, windows and doors should be opened to vent and minimize blast and fragmentation damage. Once the personnel are clear of the building, they can be directed to the holding area out of range of blast-propelled debris.

Search

Questions to be answered before ordering a search include, "Will it be an overt or a covert search?" and "Will it be conducted without evacuation, or after evacuation of the area to be searched?" (Regardless of the extent of the evacuation, a search is almost always advisable.) While circumstances of a partial or no evacuation will often necessitate a covert search, the conditions that usually enable an overt search to be conducted are those of a total evacuation. A covert search is conducted to avoid both panic and the interruption of business operations; and is generally executed by a few supervisory or managerial personnel without arousing employee suspicions. By having individual employees search their own work areas, an overt search may be completed quickly and with a minimum of lost production time. However, it may be difficult to train all employees in efficient, thorough bomb searches. Disgruntled employees have been known to place bombs, and in the search situation, just mentioned, the bomb could also be among the searchers. The use of specially selected and trained teams greatly increases the efficiency of overt search operations.

Many factors regarding the search should be taken care of during the planning and preparation stage. They include the following:

1. Select search teams. A practical and effective approach is to make the selection from among building personnel familiar with specific areas of the building. Floor area wardens may also be designated to direct specific floor or area searches and relay information to the control center. (It is advisable to provide all evacuation and search team members with some sort of distinguishing marking which identifies them as emergency personnel.)

2. Train search teams in thorough search procedures, constantly emphasizing their role as searchers and not as bomb experts. Searchers should familiarize themselves with normal building sights and sounds in order to more quickly detect any unusual object or noise. Each searcher should have a flash light; knife; standard and Phillips screwdriver; crescent wrench; probe; extension mirror; and tape, twine, chalk, or crepe paper to

mark searched areas. Ladders, bolt cutters, and prybars should be available if needed. Although normal workloads and departmental policy preclude the handling of bomb searches by public safety agencies, they may provide training assistance and offer advice on what sort of equipment is necessary for a bomb search.

3. Determine search sequence and procedures. The usual search sequence is to start

on the outside and work toward the inside. Once inside, start at the lowest level and work upward. Search techniques will be discussed in detail on the following pages.

4. Designate control center location(s) and control center operator(s); and determine communication procedures. A mobile switchboard unit can be set up outside the building, or primary and alternate switchboard locations within the facility can be utilized. Such locations should have the capacity to handle numerous calls at one time. Communication between the control center and evacuation and search teams can be accomplished with the existing telephone or intercom system. (While two-way radios, such as walkie-talkies, are not recommended because the signals they emit could cause an electric blasting cap to prematurely detonate, tables provided by the Institute of Makers of Explosives indicate that five watt walkie-talkies may be operated at five feet or more from a suspect IED)1 All evacuation and search reports should be made to the control center.

5. Provide for bomb disposal, fire-fighting, rescue, medical, and other emergency assistance.

6. Maintain strict key control. Availability of master keys is important because limited access is a common obstacle to speedy search operations. Even when able to use master leys, search teams may encounter locked locks, and the decision should be made ahead of time whether searchers will be allowed to use forcible entry in such situations.

The order of the search sequence begins with a thorough search of outside areas (shrubs, window boxes, trash containers, ornamental structures, vehicles parked around the building, etc.); building entrances and lobbies; and public areas (restrooms, stairways, elevators, elevator shafts, etc.). Due to their accessibility, these areas should be checked very carefully, with special caution being exercised when checking doors for the presence of booby traps or anti-disturbance switches. Once external and public areas have been cleared, the search on the inside begins in the basement of subbasement. When possible, searches of elevators, utility closets, and basement areas which contain large machinery should at least be guided by maintenance personnel familiar with the facility.

If the lights are off when beginning a search, it may be advisable to leave them off. (Search teams should have access to flashlights, battery operated lanterns, or other auxiliary lighting.) Booby-trapped switches can be improvised for use in many seemingly innocent ways. For this reason, lamps, rugs, drapes, pictures, and light switches should not be disturbed without first determining whether a booby trap switch mechanism is involved. Once in the room, the searcher(s), with eyes shut, should listen quietly to identify and classify background noises as either usual or unusual. Once accustomed to normal building sounds, searchers will be more likely to notice out of place noises when searching a room.

Prior to a physical room search, a visual search should be made. With the room divided into areas of responsibility, giving each searcher an equal number of places to search, both the visual and physical searches should progress in stages (e.g. floor to waist, waist to eye-level, eye-level to ceiling, and under false or suspended ceilings). The physical search sequence starts at the skies of the room, and progresses toward the center. See Figure 2. As a room or floor is cleared, chalk or tape can be used to indicate that that area has been searched. Upon checking various areas of assignment, it is a good idea to avoid saying no bomb was there. Instead, as each area is searched and cleared, a simple statement that no bomb was found should be sufficient.

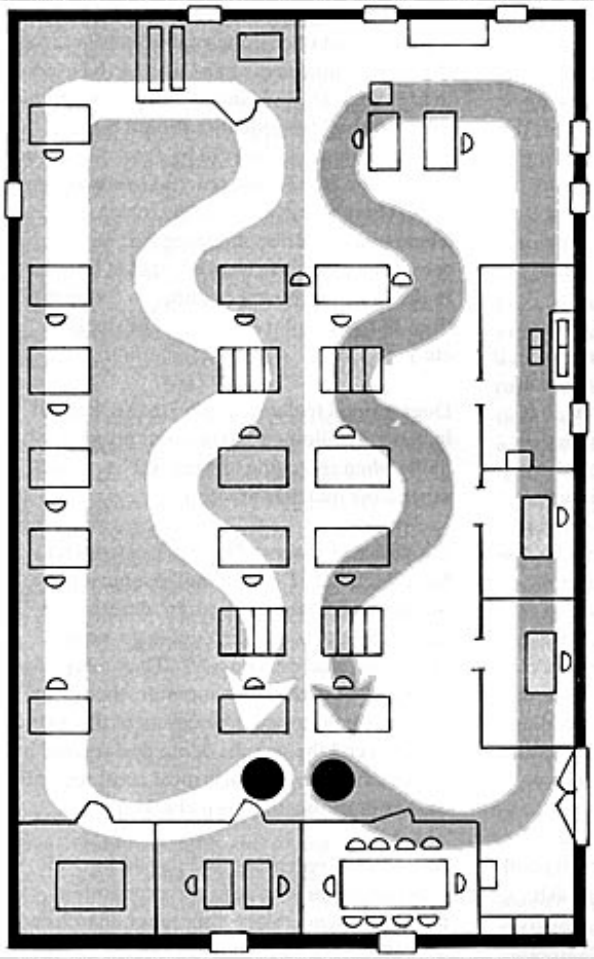


FIGURE 2: This diagram illustrates how a room might be divided and then searched from the walls to the center of the room.

The search sequences discussed in the preceding paragraphs generally enable searchers to check first those areas most likely to be used to hide an IED. In instances where this does not hold true, the sequence should be modified to allow such places to be checked early in the search. It is a good practice to search any logical bomb targets before searching elsewhere (e.g. an office or agency that has received threats or has been a target of bombers in the past, machinery essential to the operations of a particular business or businesses, etc.)

Dogs trained to detect explosives are helpful in general building searches; but are very valuable when searching lockers, vehicles, and other close quarters areas.

If a device or suspect device is located, DO NOT TOUCH IT and do not assume it to be the only one. Note its location, description, and proximity to utilities (gas lines, water pipes, and electrical panels). Then relay this information to the control center, then clear and secure the area. A discovery of this nature does not end the search. More devices may be present and search efforts must continue until the entire facility has been checked.

An aspect of searching that should be dealt with during the planning and preparation phase is fatigue. Since a thorough search can be lengthy, searcher fatigue is an important consideration. Effective training will help lessen the effect of hours of tedious searching, but other measures to alleviate fatigue should be available. By splitting the search effort (a map dividing the facility into distinct search areas should be prepared during the planning phase) and using a systematic approach, the most likely hiding places and the more difficult areas can be searched first while teams are freshest. If a prolonged search is unavoidable, search teams should be given break periods. (Six hours is about the maximum time the team can operate efficiently.) In the event no bomb is found, the subsequent decision to re-enter will be influenced mostly by the confidence

in the search procedure.

SEARCH OF AIRCRAFT

The complexities of aircraft design and interior layouts that vary from airline to airline make it unlikely that even the trained searcher would locate any but the most obvious explosive or in cendiary devices. Thus, detailed searches of large aircraft should be conducted by maintenance personnel and/or crew members, who are entirely familiar with the construction and equipment of the airplane. In emergency situations where searches must be conducted by public safety personnel without the aid of aircraft specialists, the following general procedures should be used:

1. Evacuate the area and remove all personal property.

2. Check the area around the aircraft for bombs, wires, or evidence of tampering.

3. Tow the airplane to an isolated area.

4. Start on the outside and work toward the interior of the aircraft.

5. Remove freight and baggage, and begin searching at the lowest levels and work up.

6. Check out restrooms and lounge areas.

7. Be alert for small charges placed to rupture the pressure hull or cut control cables (control cables usually run underneath the center aisle).

8. With special attention to refuse disposal containers, check food preparation and service areas.

9. Search large cabin areas.

10. Check the flight deck.

11. Search the baggage and freight in a safe area under the supervision of airline personnel. Passengers should be asked to come forward and identify and open their luggage for inspection. This makes it possible to quickly focus upon unclaimed baggage.

The use of trained explosives detecting dogs is a valuable asset in the search of aircraft. These animals can search an airplane in a fraction of the time it takes men to search; and with a greater degree of efficiency and accuracy.

INVESTIGATIVE NOTE

If an explosion occurs, do not tamper with the debris. Call for help, remove any casualties, and secure the area until the bomb technicians arrive. A blast might loosen or weaken adjacent structures. Exercise caution to avoid additional injuries from such post-explosion hazards.

FOOTNOTE

[1]lnstitute of Makers of Explosives; Publication No. 20,ÓSafety Guide for the Prevention of Radio Frequency Radiation Hazards in the Use of Electric Blasting Caps; March 1971, page 8.

Sources for this publication include:

Behavioral Science Unit, FBI Training Division.
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms,
Department of the Treasury.
Federal Aviation Administration.
International Association of Chiefs of Police.
Office of the Provost Marshal General,
Department of the Army.
FBI Bomb Data Center.